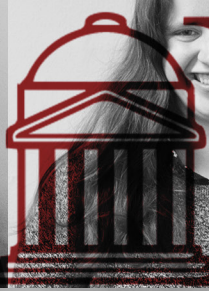


who are you?



Hilltopics

who are we?

who do we want?

to be?

I AM

On Identity

BY KENNY MARTIN

I am. We seldom realize it, but what we say (and don't say) after those two words—how we identify ourselves, to ourselves and to others—constitutes one of the most important aspects of our experience in society. The phrase, taken alone, presents a significant problem itself. I'm thinking here of philosophy's investigations into being (Descartes's *cogito* is the most famous example), the ontological explorations of science and religion (what is the nature of consciousness and the body? How did human life come about?), and the more everyday existential wonderment (and bewilderment) one is prone to feel every once in a while: *Is this me? Is that me? Am I, really?*

The phrase becomes more interesting, and more pertinent to our daily lives, when we start adding modifiers—when we start asking *How, who, why am I?* The most basic modifier we have is our name, a marker of identity that most of us do not choose. *I'm Kenny*, I say, usually without a second thought. But there are social implications of my name that I seldom realize: people may associate me with particular pieces of culture (like Kenny in South Park... this happens more than you'd like to know), personality types ("my Uncle

Kenny is really nice/aggressive/charming/etc. so maybe you'll be like that too), or other markers of identity (particularly when they hear my last name, Martin, they may assume I'm a white American with Irish heritage). And they will certainly assume that I am a straight, cis man. All this without me thinking about the resonances and meanings my name might be projecting. A slightly more disturbing question then follows: who might I have been if I hadn't been named as I was? Might my life have been better, or worse, or just different?

Though our proper names are important, many of us (though not all) get by without worrying too much about them. It's a different story, however, with other aspects of identity. The stakes are all of a sudden much higher when we follow *I am* with words describing race, sexuality, gender, class, age, religion, and others. In our culture, *I am black* has tremendously different implications than does *I am white*, and *I am Asian American* has tremendously different implications than does *I am black*. The same is true for *I am rich/poor, straight/gay, man/woman*, and many others. I put things in terms of

hierarchical binaries not to reinforce them but rather to point out that identity is often only recognized in particular, prepackaged, assimilated, normative ways by our society, and those ways tend to almost always be hierarchical and binary. Thus, it is often more difficult to say *I am bisexual* than it is to say *I am gay*; the same goes for such identifications as *I am multiracial, I am genderqueer, I am middle class but barely getting by.*

Luckily for many, parts of society are becoming more aware of the rich diversity of human identity and self-expression, and many social spaces allow people to identify themselves in a greater variety of ways than ever before. I'm thinking here of Facebook's long list of gender identities that people can choose from. This increased awareness of identity has been a central element of "identity politics" liberalism, and though there are many valid critiques of such a politics, many people's lives have improved dramatically as a partial result, and the language and policy of the Left and the Right have changed in many ways for the better. At the least, people are talking about identity in new ways, and society seems more open to multiplicity and variety of identity than ever before.

The election of Donald Trump, of course, casts a new (and for many, unforeseen) light on such matters. It also illuminates another recent twist on identity, one that in my view bears much of the responsibility for the 'breakdown of dialogue' between the Right and the Left that many seem willing to complain about but few actually willing to do anything about. What I mean is this: it seems to me that in recent years, people have begun to think of their identities not only in terms of their name, race, gender, religion, etc., but also in terms of their political affiliation and ideological bent. In other words, *I am a Republican/Democrat/liberal/conservative/radical/libertarian/etc.* has become one of the ways people mark themselves, one of the axes along which they see their fundamental place in society, and one of the foundational elements

THE HEART OF SMU'S INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

of their being. This infection of our conceptions of self by political ideology has been a great success on the part of the political establishment as a whole (yes, that includes, even, the likes of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders).

But it has been detrimental to discourse among the people—the supposed heart of democracy—to the point that all political arguments have become personal arguments, the stakes so high and so personally perturbing that we simply avoid having political arguments at all.

And that is just bullshit. It is one thing for an LGBTQ+ student to have difficulty arguing with their explicitly homophobic uncle, or for a Jewish person to resist the thought of going at it with their notoriously anti-Semitic in-law. I'm aware that such situations are difficult and potentially dangerous (though I think those conversations are vital nonetheless), and I'm also aware that in calling for a discourse divorced from the potency of identity, I risk

appearing to erase the importance of identity markers that *should* figure into political debate (race, gender, sexuality, etc.). That's not what I mean to suggest.

My point is that for two people who are merely politically opposed to avoid what ought to be collegial argument—argument that serves to sharpen our understanding of diverse perspectives and make us better educated people—is absurd. This isn't to say, either, that argument can't be heated—it can and should be—but that at the end of the day we ought to be able to argue the hell out of a point and then shake hands and say, "Thanks, I'm looking forward to next time."

So this is my request: talk to one another, and make it a point to seek out those you know disagree with you, and talk to them. Don't just talk, argue. This request goes out, in particular, to those of us who form our identities, in some way, around any of the following words: *artist, poet, wordsmith, thinker, intellectual.*

These are hard conversations to have, and easy to write off as needless, or distracting, or "not appropriate for the dinner table." But there has never been a time, nor a place, more appropriate for such conversations in our country.

Finally, think about how you call yourself, how you situate yourself in webs of alliance and opposition and agreement and disagreement. Realize that though many, if not all, of our identity markers are socially constructed, fluid, and often specious in their workings (here in the academy we ought to be particularly aware of such things), identity nonetheless matters. Identity, for better or worse, *means* a whole lot in our society. More than anything, realize that we have some say in how we call ourselves, how we see ourselves, and how the world sees us. We have some say in how we relate and talk to people across lines of division. We have some say in how we act. Who are we, then? The choice is all ours.

- *Kenny Martin*



I AM GAY DOCTOR BLACK ENGINEER MIXED RACE
WHITE ASIAN AMERICAN GENDERQUEER INDIAN
WRITER FEMALE BISEXUAL
DEMOCRAT STRAIGHT REPUBLICAN ME

Colorblind to White Privilege

BY CAMILLE AUCOIN

About half a year ago, I was talking to my best friend when she called me out for being privileged. I won't lie; I was upset. It hurt to hear someone so close to me say that. After some thought, however, I realized something:

She was right. Obviously.

I've spent my entire life being privileged, both in terms of money and in terms of just being white, as have a fair portion of us at SMU. I grew up with mostly white neighbors in a mostly white city. Why is it that it took 21 and a half years to realize that all of this makes me privileged? It was almost like walking around for an entire day with a huge spinach leaf on your front teeth: you just feel stupid when you finally see it, like you definitely should have noticed it earlier in the day.

I think white people have become colorblind. Not in the sense that "we don't see color; everyone is equal," because that couldn't be further from the truth for a lot of us. Rather, things have become black and white, them and us, with only shades of grey in between. The lighter the shade of grey, the more accepting we are on a subconscious level. We don't see color because we try to turn everything either black or white. Historically, it's what we've always understood best; and humans, as a species, do nothing better than resist

changes to our accepted knowledge and understanding. We place people into categories we have created rather than view them as individuals with unique stories, struggles, and strengths.

We can thank our colonial ancestors for deeply engraving these sentiments into our social norms, but who can we thank for perpetuating them in the modern age? Only ourselves.

White privilege is the ability to look at the world and disregard color because your own color will never affect your livelihood. It is the ability to disregard the implications of actions, policy, and law on minorities because the color of your skin elevates your comfort over their basic human rights. It is the ability to say, "I have no problem with it; I just don't want to see it" because you're lucky enough to choose what you want to see in the world. It is the ability to make decisions for those whom you know nothing about without ever consulting them or learning their story.

Do I run around spouting white supremacist jargon and actively attacking minorities? No, thankfully. But do I do anything to stop the internalized values in the back of my mind that affect my decisions and my views of others daily? Not usually, unfortunately.

Being self-aware of this is troubling. How do you fight on a larger scale what you yourself embody? How do you see color when that means potentially giving up your own comforts? And how do you accomplish this when many of your own friends and family are just as colorblind as you?

I've struggled with these thoughts for months now. How can I embrace my own identity while simultaneously raising up those whose identities are threatened or smothered, and is my own identity even valid anymore? At this point in my life, my best answer is to listen.

It's only a start, but listen to those around you. Listen to those who feel their voices are being stifled. Listen to those who have been screaming to be heard for decades now. Listen and stop deciding who does and who does not get a voice in this country. Stop deciding that you can understand a life you've never experienced yourself. Listen to those who you would normally tune out. Let people be heard. It's the least we can do, right? Be an ally without assuming anything and serve others without feeling the need to fix them.

I don't know how to remedy all the issues in this country. I don't think anybody does. What I do know is that we have spent over two centuries in this country being too concerned with our own careers, families, and comforts to give a damn about those who have been fighting to enjoy life like we do. This isn't about opening or closing the borders or welfare or minimum wage; it's about basic human decency and respect. That's what we owe to minorities in the United States: some basic respect. I believe the rest will follow suit.

I hope that one day I will no longer feel like my identity is encroaching upon the validity of others and their own identities. Until then, I'll listen, listen, and listen. I'd encourage other white people to do the same.



You Can't Go Home Again

BY NICOLE KISER

Hundreds of students join SMU's campus every year. We have one of the most beautiful campuses in the nation and a residential commons system specially designed to foster a sense of community. The housing brochures actually say, "Welcome home." Ten months out of the year are spent on campus, yet when we leave for break, we say we're going "home."

Within hours of my return home for Thanksgiving, I was surrounded by old friends desperate to see each

other and share our stories. Warm cookies, fresh from the oven; the soft murmur of family members' voices in the living room; the quiet rumble of the washer and dryer—all the sounds and comforts of home became background to a joyous reunion.

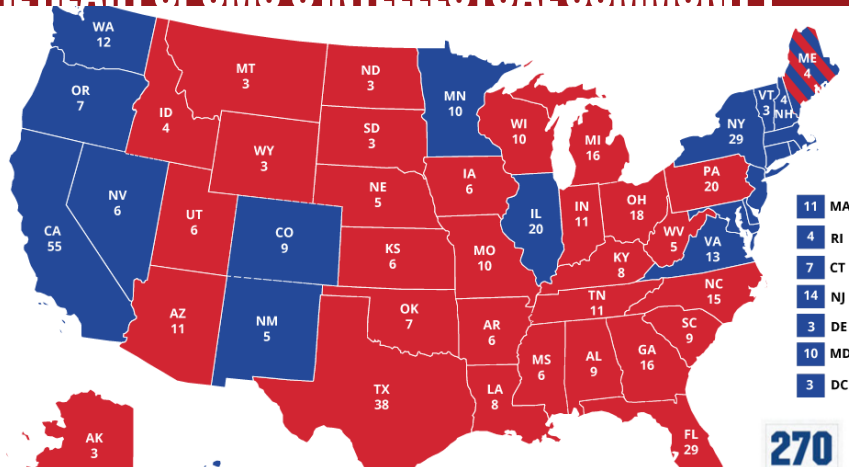
Home encompasses this intangible sense of comfort and security, feelings of belonging and community. Leaving for college made me wonder: Is there a point where home is no longer "home?"

At some point, I will leave the home where I was raised. There will be a time for me to find an apartment, get a job, and start a life, and I will build a "home" somewhere else. In my mind, my hometown and the house where I grew up will always feel like home. But not everyone has the same opportunity to both move forward and cling to the familiar comforts, sounds, and friends of their old world.

Many immigrants leave their countries due to violence, persecution, or poverty, among a litany of other reasons that jeopardize them and their families. Some even run from threat of death. There is no returning "home" for those forced to flee. Conflict shatters the safety we associate with home, and these people must build a new home wherever they end up, often constructing community without the comfort of family.

I visited over a dozen colleges and universities the summer before my senior year. Classrooms and campuses, dorm rooms and dining halls: they all seemed the same until I found myself staring up at the ceiling of Dallas Hall. There, I realized that some homes we can never return to—but if we're lucky we can choose and find new places in which to build new homes. I'm one of the lucky ones; I found a place where I didn't feel alone, a place where I could belong, a place, ultimately, to call home.

LEAVING RETURNING BUILDING A HOME



Election 2016: Discourse without Discernment

BY ELIZABETH RIDGWAY

Although historians like to present an egalitarian vision of America, divisions rooted in social constructs and arbitrary hierarchies of class, gender, and race exist deep in the sociopolitical systems in the United States. By digging into these structural imbalances, the bruising polemics of the 2016 election broadened the range of acceptable political discourse to an unprecedented level. Exploiting the conservative rejection of P.C. culture, Donald Trump's rhetoric took advantage of nativist fears and marginalized others to promote his campaign. Although it appears that the president-elect has no intent to follow through on his more controversial campaign promises, if he didn't mean what he said, does that mitigate the dissension he catalyzed? In the wake of the election, Americans need to reconcile both how the national emphasis on identity politics failed to stifle Trump's inflammatory rhetoric and why the president-elect was able to strike a chord with almost half of the US population, despite his incessant invective.

Excluding the alt-right, many of Trump's supporters did not actively seek to advance narratives of intolerance. Rather, they had legitimate concerns about the economy, immigration, and the establishment. Almost all of the American public acknowledged that Trump's rhetoric was unacceptable.

Recognizing that Trump's rhetoric is misguided and incendiary, his apologists argued during the campaign that he didn't mean what he said and would not seek to institute policies that reflected his comments. Trump himself may not personally believe the things he says, but as a politician and public figure, his job is to cogently express his ideas to the public. He ran on a platform that was a combination of anti-establishmentarianism and hate: at various times, his policy ideas included breaking the Geneva Convention to fight terrorism, deporting over 11 million undocumented immigrants and building a physical wall à la China to keep them out, draining the establishment swamp in Washington, creating a registry of Muslims and banning them from entering the US, and repealing Obamacare.

Regardless of whether he intended to enact these policies or not, his rhetoric elevated the validity of hatred and provided it with a legitimate vehicle. According to USA Today, the rise in hate crimes in the aftermath of the election outnumbers the increase that occurred in the wake of 9/11. From mocking the disabled to attacking women on the basis of looks, even if Trump didn't genuinely mean the things he said during the campaign, ultimately, the larger issue is that his rhetoric gave a voice to people who seek to marginalize others who look and think differently from the way

that they do. Donald Trump ushered hate into the mainstream. He expanded the window of acceptable statements and actions by asserting the unthinkable, strategically moving the radical to the sphere of legitimate controversy. The creeping normality of Trump's rhetoric enabled people to ask, "If a president can act this way, why can't I?"

It's important to note that he was able to normalize his rhetoric by campaigning on the idea that he would make America great again. To understand the validity of this argument, we must analyze what makes America great—and if we need to make America great again, that indicates that America was great at some point. While I firmly believe that we live in a great country, it's undeniable that, historically, America has not always been a great nation for women and minorities. Our historical narratives tend to argue that America arose as a classless society, one where anyone from anywhere could do anything—what we so often fail to recount is that this reality tended to only prevail for white men for most of our history. To argue that we need to return to a time in American history when we were great argues that the era when women couldn't vote, the span of time when we dehumanized and enslaved an entire people group for free labor on the basis of their skin color, or the period when we exploited other countries through colonization to make ourselves into an economic superpower were the apexes of our history.

The basis of American exceptionalism is our willingness to compete and to coexist. To build a nation where people of any race, creed, gender, or religious affiliation can be accepted is the great American experiment—it goes against every fiber of natural tribal instincts. While the fragmented narratives of American experience ensure routine clashes, they also enable diversity of thought. However, during the administrative transition, it is important to remember that the country did not change on Election Day. America did not become suddenly

more disrespectful and intolerant on November 9th. Most Americans who aren't impacted by their identities have other fears that—for them—outweigh the anxieties that arise from identity. While it is unfair to label every Trump voter as a racist, xenophobe, or misogynist, it is also irresponsible to ignore the impact of his rhetoric on women and minorities. A vote for Trump does not necessarily signify a vote for hate—but it does indicate indifference to it.

Perhaps instead of attacking all Trump supporters as hateful, we need to re-examine what motivates them and find out how identity-based liberalism failed—let us seek to understand first and judge

second. Identity politics have taken a hold on modern liberalism. By focusing on diversity, they sought to bring acceptance to all worldviews and perspectives; by not counterbalancing this individualism with an emphasis on the threads of American commonality, they may have contributed to the deep divisions of race, gender, education, and class that emerged in election exit polls. Identity-based liberalism has resulted in tremendous social progress, but it needs to work toward transcending diversity and uniting Americans on the basis of mutual respect. Identity politics should not supersede economics and international policy.

Even after the divisiveness of the election, I remain optimistic, because I believe that we are the least prejudiced and most open generation so far in American history. Millennial voters (ages 18-34) rejected Trump by a margin of 18 points according to Pew Research exit polls. Trump may have won the election, but his rhetoric and invective don't have to dominate our culture. Awareness and forgiveness are equally important. Let us make America great by continuing to act with candor, competence, and concern, respecting both the identities and the values of others—regardless of whether or not we agree with them, and regardless of whether or not our president chooses to do so.

HE/SHE/THEY

Breaking the Stalemate between Wordsmiths & Sentence Architects

BY RIVER RIBAS

Scene: My first poetry class, many years ago, while visiting a college in Indiana. In the slow rumble of students before class, I peeked over from my eager spot in the first row and read a button on a chest. "Ask me about my Pronouns." A *volta*. Before I know it I'm out of my seat and clamoring to get closer to the person, something deeper than curiosity burning.

"Hey," I say, and I ask about pronouns. After a smile like a cresting wave, I learn about their pronouns. They didn't fit into the gender binary, and instead of settling for he or she, they chose the gender-neutral alternative.

We kept chatting. "River! Oh my, what an androgynous name. You lucky duck." I was blushing and fanning myself when the professor entered, and I switched seats and sat next to them for the class. I didn't end up writing poems or plays in Evansville, Indiana, but my 48 hours in the Midwest were truly illuminating.

I couldn't help but think of them when I heard that the American Dialect Society named gender-neutral "they" the word of the year for 2015. Finally! The scholars threw us a scrap (of course they'd be somewhat anthropological in nature). I've tried to broach the topic in poetry

class, after prose class, after studies on literary studies, only to hear the same old stale shrug. It's too hard to repurpose a word, Academia whines, ignoring the mutability of language that brought us from "to be or not to be" to "lol."

But to bring Shakespeare into the conversation is to bring in the literally literary history of the gender-neutral "they," which can be found in the works of Jane Austin, Shakespeare, and Chaucer. Crowning jewels of the Canon, no? It's not new. We aren't just angsty. We are at the cusp of the gender binary, insidious in our culture, media, and language (do I dare need to say politics?) If we, wordsmiths and sentence architects, cannot communicate the needs we have of our language, then our very medium becomes a collection of useless rocks that we hoard and throw at each other, all the while babbling (un-?)intelligibly.

In those moments, when the bureaucracy of language seems so much bigger than all of us, mere sentient beings, I hope to remember that language is our donkey. It works for us. Turn to those you do not understand and ask, "Why do you think that?" Oh, Liberal Arts College, let's deem language as a means of communication and camaraderie, not another barrier itself.

We asked UHP students:

What was your reaction to the 2016 Presidential Election?

“It was **shocking** but I'm not upset at the outcome. Hillary was the face of a good movement, but she was a criminal. Trump won, but his occasional slip-ups have associated him with the most hurtful racists and sexists of this country. People **shouldn't blame Trump** for what hurtful things other common people say to people of a different race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. The responsibility of those words should be placed on the people of the words who spoke them. Although Trump may not be the leader that we need, he is the **lesser of two evils.**”

“I don't particularly like the outcome. That being said, I do not believe that either main candidate was a good choice but that the better candidate was chosen. I think the people **protesting** are doing a good thing, exercising their rights, but the people **rioting** are overstepping their bounds and are no longer even being helpful.”

“It **angered** me deeply, but also gave me hope that people would **wake up** to the already existing social ills that Trump embodies. Now we know that racism, sexism and xenophobia are alive and well, and that we need to confront and **combat** them actively.”

“Very glad that Hillary didn't win, as her **villainization** of the **firearms industry** is deplorable. Additionally her foreign policy would get us into **another war** in the Middle East.”

“Though I disagree with President-elect Trump's rhetoric, I am interested to see if he follows through on his policies. Given that he will be assuming the office with **Republican control of Congress**, it will be interesting to see how successful he is at enacting his ideas and who he **nominates to the Supreme Court**. I believe the courts and Congress will likely stymie many of the significantly **controversial** proposals made during the campaign season.”

“Very **disappointed**. Shocked because most news sources I access failed to predict the outcome realistically. **Uncertain and concerned** for the next four years in the US, both domestically and in foreign policy terms. Trump probably won't do as much harm as many think, but he also won't make any progress in my opinion, and will likely backtrack. The election is mostly upsetting because it shows just how many people are so averse to **losing their privilege** and how many people have already been failed by the state.”

“I feel disappointed and **scared** for our country. I am trying to **stay hopeful** about the next four years, but it is **hard.**”

“I was very **happy** with the result of the election. I think everyone needs to look past the president-elect's personal life and see the good that he can do for this country, specifically the **economy**. I voted for Donald Trump because I believe in the **American dream** and I felt he was the best candidate to preserve that dream.”

Elation. Though I was called a racist, bigot, etc. and lost friends in the process, America has made the decision to be **great again.**

I think this is a **massive setback** for a variety of good causes, including **civil rights** and especially climate change. I believe the strong surge in financial markets is indicative of a strong short term reaction to the President-elect's economic policies; however, I believe in the medium-to long-term these policies will be **detrimental to the economy** and we will enter a recession. I think his election is also a symptom of, rather than the cause of, the backlash caused by globalization and an information revolution.

Disappointing and **concerning.** While neither candidate was particularly strong, electing a **misogynist** with no political experience as the leader of our country is just **embarrassing** for America.

The **hatred** from both sides has been unbelievable. I'm disappointed in both parties for their aggressive and **vulgar generalizations.** The people of neither party are "deplorables" but the wild claims these groups have made are. One disenfranchised group got their voice heard, and that is important, but it's heard at the expense of other groups. What we need most right now is **unity.**

Although I felt as though **neither option** was particularly optimal, I'm ecstatic that Hillary Clinton lost. **As a woman,** I would have been **ashamed to elect her;** her crookedness is not something I want to see in the first female president. The **lying,** cheating and **corruptness** of Hillary disgusts me, and I'm sure she would have sent our country even more downhill. I think Trump truly wants to make change in our country. Even more so, I believe he will.

I'm disappointed. We tell our **kids** to be kind and work hard, but we just elected a **bully and a cheater** to our **highest office.** Even if he turns out to be a decent president, the way he ran his campaign contradicted a lot of the **values** we as a country preach.

The week of the election, my Gothic art history course discussed depictions of the "other" in Medieval sculpture and manuscripts. Dr. Joyner showed us depictions of Jews and Africans as **grotesque caricatures,** and we discussed the role that fear plays in the way people see the world and its peoples. It was a topical discussion that I am grateful for, and as the past two weeks have unfolded, I am realizing that the election outcomes indicate that America's population is **repeating history.** Fear is as abundant in 2016 America as it was in the Middle Ages. **Fear** makes people do mean, mean things. **Fear** makes people hate. **Fear** is what helped Donald Trump win.

I **cried** my eyes out. As a **survivor of sexual assault,** it is both terrifying and demeaning to see that our next president is a **rapist.**

We're Better Together!

Diversity:

Finding Ways to Take a Stand

BY TAYLOR SOURYACHAK

It was some time last Monday, late in the evening, when I met up with Gaby in the Fondren Library to make the counter flyers. Throughout the entire day I couldn't shake what I had seen earlier. That afternoon, Jessica Jancose and I were sitting in the Women & LGBT Center, and she asked if I'd seen the Anti-Black flyer. When she showed me a picture of it on her phone, I was in disbelief, disgusted and upset that something like that was going around. At the same time I wasn't surprised, given the racist history of the SMU student body. In 2015 a sorority girl posted anonymously on a website, listing reasons why black girls wouldn't be selected if they rushed a historically white sorority. And, a fraternity decided to throw a themed party, encouraging attendees to 'bring out their inner thug.' Promotional materials for the party included pictures of a black rapper and a black woman in a provocative position.

Jessica also shared the picture in a GroupMe chat that we were in and encouraged everyone to report the flyer if they saw it on campus. After class, I posted in the GroupMe that I planned on creating a counter flyer that same night. I asked if anyone wanted to help, and Gaby posted in the chat that she was already in the library making one. So, I headed over after walking a friend back to

their dorm because they said they felt unsafe walking back alone. The campus environment has grown intense and precarious, particularly following the election of Donald Trump.

Indeed, harassment of minority students has increased since the election. A female student wore a Mexican soccer jersey to class the day following the election and was told to go back to her country. Another student was spit on while leaving their apartment to go to class. On top of that, the Anti-Black flyers showed up in multiple buildings on campus. I simply felt that I had to do something—for the students who felt fearful, hurt, anxious, and hated—to show that not everyone on this campus supports the ideology represented in those flyers.

So once I finally got to the library, Gaby and I decided that we wanted to make a positive flyer that promoted diversity. We also wanted to back up our statements using research studies. The 'data' presented to support the statements of the Anti-Black flyers was old, specious, and propagandistic; this sort of thing, I've learned in my Human Sexuality and History of Sex in America classes, has long been used largely by white men to ensure their superior status to black men, particularly in an effort

to keep white women for themselves.

But we wanted to use actual research to support statements that promoted diversity, acceptance, and truth. To show that the racist ideology of the flyers is wrong on all counts, and more importantly to create a public voice of support, encouragement, and solidarity for all students and minority students in particular. Gaby designed the flyer, making sure to avoid politicized language, and we kept it short and sweet. Gaby also wanted the flyers to be printed in color, to contrast with the stark, polarizing black and white of the Anti-Black flyer.

Printed flyers in hand, we went to see Val Erwin, the student organization advisor in the Women & LGBT Center. First, we wanted her opinion of the counter flyer, and we asked about the school regulations regarding the posting of flyers on campus. She informed us that as long as we posted them in locations that do not require approval then it would be okay.

Next we set off to post the flyers. We asked Karen Guan, who was also in the library, if she wanted to help. The three of us went around to various buildings (Hyer, Dedman Life Science, Fondren Science, and Dallas Hall) and put them on the bulletin boards. We also decided to ask the women on the executive board of WIN if they would help to distribute the flyers in their dorms, and they (Jessica Jancose, Julia Cantú, Nusaiba Mizan, and one other) were happy to do so.

Since then, there's been positive feedback on the flyers from the SMU community and beyond. Other positive flyers have also shown up around campus. I've seen one that was taped around Fondren Library, and on pillars and street poles. Another one has been taped on bathroom stall doors. All of these speak of acceptance, community, and unity.

But positivity does not make exciting

news. The Anti-Black flyers have received much more media attention, so much so that many might overlook the very real aspect of SMU's culture that is positive and accepting. I do think that among the student community, people are doing what they can to help change the SMU culture. There are various forms and levels of activism, of which many students take part. Posting flyers is just one form. What's clear, though,

is that every little bit counts—even something as simple as standing up and saying something when something happens in person can make a big difference. In fact, it can often make the biggest difference of them all.

It is important to take some sort of action, no matter how big or small, to show that we will not stand by and let ignorance and discrimination reign.

We are and must be each other's allies and support, and we must embrace people of all identities in all areas: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex, gender expression, religion, ability, citizenship, age, class, and more. I am Asian, female, lesbian, and a 1st generation SMU student. I'm proud to be able to declare my identity openly, and so should every other student on this campus.

- Upon graduation, students who experienced opportunities to confront multicultural issues in the classroom and in extracurricular settings report heightened satisfaction with their overall college experience. [1]
- Students who interact with diverse peers, both in and out of the classroom, show greater active thinking, intellectual engagement, and motivation.[2]
- Most importantly, having friends of different backgrounds is an enriching and fun experience no one should miss out on!

My Reaction to the Racist Flyer as a Mixed Race Person

BY GABY GONZALEZ

On Monday, November 14th, I received a disturbing message on GroupMe. A friend of mine warned our group that there were horrible flyers circulating around campus. These flyers were found in Armstrong Commons and Dedman Life Science and they discouraged white women from dating black men. The “reasons” listed ranged from a supposed risk of STD's (which can occur in any relationship) to an absurd claim that one's children would have a low IQ if they were mixed-raced. The flyer also attributed documented domestic violence cases to being black, not unhealthy relationship dynamics.

As a mixed-race individual, these flyers flew in the face of my entire upbringing. The relationship of my parents, while not perfect, served as an example for how I should interact with people that are different from me. My mother is white with an Italian background and grew up in Michigan. My father has a Mexican

background, but his family has been in Texas for almost two centuries. They worked as a team to give my sister and me a better life. Being able to experience a blend of cultures taught me to respect the cultures of others while treating them as individuals.

Growing up, I remember playing with other children who had families from different backgrounds on the playground and not thinking anything of it. I did not take into account the race of my friends when we were making sandcastles and playing Pokémon cards. However, I began to get the sense that I was different from my peers around junior high. That's when the racist commentary and jokes began. I was an “exception” a “credit to my race” to my white peers; I was “not enough” and “too white” to my Latino/a peers. Some would try to guess my national origin like it was a game because of my ambiguous appearance. Others

would make fun of my sister and me for appearing so different because she is white passing and I am not. Perhaps the incident that sticks out in my head the most was when I was told that the only reason I was attractive was because I did not look like how Latinas “usually look.” How is an ethnicity that is by definition multiracial supposed to look like in the first place?

When I first heard about the racist flyers, Taylor Souryachak came up with an idea to make a counter-flyer. I immediately offered to help design them. I had to stand up for everything that I had been raised to believe and my experiences. The racist and insensitive comments that I received in the past were not going to stop me from defending my family and my existence. With the help of the Women's Interest Network board (Jessica Pires-Jancose, Julia Cantú, Nusaiba Mizan, Cheyenne Murray, and Karen Guan), we were able to distribute a counter-flyer that celebrated diversity in education and in the workplace.

I was first asked about the counter-flyer by *The Daily Campus* the day after Taylor and I made it and I was glad to answer any questions. However, I chose to withhold my name from the article written about the counter-flyer. Despite wanting to push back against the tide of racist incidents on campus and across the country, I was afraid. I had seen too many countless stories of alt-right white nationalist accounts online attacking those that spoke out against their hatred. In spite of

this, the response to the counter-flyer was quite positive. Students were excited about them. The counter-flyers received a lot of coverage in the media as well; even The Washington Post shared tweets about the flyers.

After thinking for a while, I believed it was right to place a name on the counter-flyer. It was important for me to get over my fear of harassment.

Alt-right white nationalist trolls should be given no credence. They believe in a lie of supremacy that only serves to comfort their wounded egos. Talent and love lies in every corner of the world and in every ethnicity and race. To not accept this fact is to ignore the reality of the world. I cannot be silent when there are individuals who will attack my intelligence and being simply

because of the race of my parents. I cannot be quiet when my family is under attack for who they are. While my identity has been difficult to piece together at times due to the racism I have experienced over the years, I have found that my identity has led me to fight for myself and those around me. This is something I will always be thankful for and would not change for the world.



Facebook Wall of Hate

BY LORIEN MELNICK

Waking up to a Facebook feed full of political commentary, videos, and overall hate has been a reality for many Americans over the past few months. The shaming (“If you voted for Trump, you must hate minorities, you racist bigot”), the judgment (“I can’t associate with you if you voted for so-and-so”), and the rants (“I know you don’t want my opinion, but here it is”) reached a peak in the week after the election.

It made me think: is this a good way to share your opinions? Plastering them onto everyone’s social media walls? Forcing your thoughts on people who never asked for them?

Freshmen at SMU take a class called Personal Responsibility and Wellness (PRW), and this semester, all the PRW classes completed an “awareness” activity. A stranger stood at the front of the room and asked us all to come to the middle, and then she pointed

to one wall.

“I am going to read a statement,” she said, “and if you agree with it, please step to this side of the room. If you disagree, please step to the other side of the room.”

My stomach already felt sick. I didn’t really know any of the kids in the class, but they were still people I had to interact with for the rest of the semester. As an introvert, I prefer to keep my opinions largely to myself, unless I genuinely have something to contribute to an argument. Still, I moved along with the other students.

The statements varied between light and heavy opinion questions, from “Is Colin Kaepernick being unpatriotic by not standing for the anthem?” to “Should abortion be legal?” and “Should same-sex couples be allowed to marry?” The class divided and the stranger asked if anyone wanted to

defend their position.

For the most part, things were kept civil, but not entirely. Some homophobic and racist things were said, and while those sharing might have been comfortable with shouting out their opinions to the entire class, not all the listeners were comfortable hearing them. The class consisted of several students of color and at least one LGBT+ student. Overall, most of the people I spoke to had very negative experiences during the activity, feeling isolated on a different side of the room or forced to hear degrading comments about how “poor kids deserve to be screwed over in the ACT process, because they’ll never be as smart as upper-class kids.”

Which brings me back to the original question: what is the civil way to share your opinion? Of course, everyone is entitled to their own opinions and the right to share them, but when considering your fellow humans’ feelings, how should you share? When should you share? Where should you share?

In my opinion, dialogue is important—now more than ever. Engaging in conversation with people who hold different opinions can open up ideas, widen horizons, or at the very least, allow for greater consideration of people who are different from you. But posting on your Facebook account is not dialogue. Forcing students to declare charged political opinions by standing divided from each other is not dialogue.

But then, that’s my opinion. Am I forcing it on you?



The Power of Green

BY DREW SNEED

“Climb up onto my lap,” my grandpa beckoned with his arms outstretched, a contagious smile on his face. “Now, my memory ain’t what it used to be, but did I ever tell you about our family’s history?”

“Nope!” I lied, my eyes fixed on his giant container of bubble gum. I knew that if I let him tell the story again he would reward me with a few pieces of it, and he did.

As I unwrapped the treats and climbed onto his lap, my grandpa told a story which may sound familiar to you. He told me of a multitude of people forced to leave their homeland and travel across the Atlantic Ocean to an unwelcoming America. He said that many Americans grossly stereotyped these people as violent, alcoholic, and prone to crime. He told me that this group faced constant job discrimination and seemed to be strangled by the grip of poverty. He said that these people were at odds with the police, and that the Democratic Party wooed them in large numbers. With a look of disgust, my grandpa recounted that the self-righteous showered them with pseudo-praise for their abilities in sports, song, and dance, while

the most deplorable called them “less-evolved” and depicted them as gorillas.

“Now, do you know which country John F. Kennedy’s ancestors came from?”

“Ireland,” I answered, all pretenses removed now that the gum was safely in my mouth.

“Good! And how did our ancestors, who struggled for so long, end up with a president to their name?”

“I don’t know...” I mumbled, not in a return to the facade, but in a lapse of memory.

“Because despite its flaws, America is a beautiful country and it rewards hard work,” he said with a revealing look in his eyes. He didn’t just speak the words—he also knew their joy.

My grandfather went on to tell me that John F. Kennedy’s great-grandparents were impoverished Irish immigrants, his grandparents were a modest success, and due to hard work his parents attained a fortune which paved the way for Kennedy to become president. My

grandpa tied this story into the narrative of many Irish Americans who overcame their struggles by improving relations with the police, becoming the police, earning quality educations to secure higher paying jobs, and running for and attaining political office.

Due to an initial, remorseful suspicion of their truthfulness, I have since done research into these stories my grandpa told me. To my delight, the history to which he subscribed has fallen under the criticism of only a few scholars, and they have themselves been ridiculed for their untruthful critiques. But beyond just telling me the history, my grandfather taught me its significance: America truly allows the discriminated against to succeed, and if they so choose, to surpass the discriminators. This is a result of America’s free market which says, “If you will not hire or sell to qualified people due to their ethnicity or race, then other businesses will steal your profit by hiring and selling to those whom you snubbed.”

Yes, the color capitalism truly cares about is green, and I don’t mean the Irish. Although, Irish Americans are doing quite well financially. According to a census taken in 2014, Irish Americans possess a greater median household income than whites as a whole (*American Community Survey*). To further the point, the race with the highest median household income (Asian Americans) has itself suffered gross racial-based discrimination in America (*American Community Survey*). And though the left may try to write off the latter group’s success as merely the result of Asian privilege, it serves as powerful evidence of America’s status as a meritocracy, and a validation of my grandpa’s claim to its willingness to reward cultures—and more importantly, people—who value education and hard work. My grandpa truly loved his country and he taught me to do the same. If he were alive today, I am certain I would hear him say, “America does not need to be made great again, it already is.”



APPROPRIATION

Christianity & Islam are Cultural Appropriations

BY FAIROOZ ADAMS

A regular reader of *Hilltopics* will know that I am a staunch opponent of the regressive leftism and the rising tide of illiberalism that has taken root in college campuses as well as its twin scourge, the alt-right. One area that I have referred to repeatedly is “cultural appropriation.”

The concept is a fairly straightforward one. Groups that have been historically marginalized are entitled to cultural purity in this view. Their norms, customs, dress, and even food and other cultural features cannot be replicated, experimented with, or integrated, particularly if the culture doing the appropriating is considered as belonging to a privileged group.

Such a concept is illiberal to begin with. Freedom ought to never be limited by accidents of birth. Rights are not a zero sum game, so long as there is no direct harm or risk to life, liberty, or private property. Unsurprisingly, whining over cultural appropriation is a mainstay of both the regressive left and alternative right. Neither group understands that culture is not a copyrighted artifact, that claims to

legitimacy over lineage are as silly as claims today that accidents of birth entitle people to be heads of state—that monarchs should rule because of their birth, not because of the democratic will of a people.

In fact, under the principles that deem cultural appropriation “problematic,” it would be impossible for a Christian or Muslim to deride cultural appropriation without becoming a hypocrite, for both Christianity and Islam themselves appropriate Jewish beliefs. The Christian Bible’s Old Testament makes heavy use of Jewish scriptures. Islam takes a tremendous amount of inspiration from Judaism as well. The origin stories are virtually identical, all three reference a great flood and Noah’s ark, they share many of the same holy sites, refer to many of the same prophets, and there is substantial overlap on questions of morality. Christianity and Islam are, in some sense, rip-offs of Judaism.

Judaism is also a “marginalized minority,” like the groups today that are supposedly victims of cultural

appropriation. Indeed, the Jewish people have been marginalized almost since their inception. This includes expulsion from their homeland and enslavement by ancient empires, pogroms and the Holocaust, and widespread discrimination still today. The only place on Earth the Jewish people constitute a majority, Israel, has repeatedly ceased to exist as an independent state.

In the present day United States, more hate crimes are committed against Jewish people annually than against any other group. Decades after the Holocaust, there is again a rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe. In the last caliphate, Jewish people could live only so long as they paid the *jizya*, a tax on non-Muslims. Anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories run rampant today in the Middle East.

Jewish people have been exploited and murdered on an industrial scale. It is hard to find a group in history that has been oppressed as routinely as the Jewish people. So why don’t regressive leftists decry the unceremonious theft and appropriation of the Jewish people’s most sacred texts by the religious institutions of Christianity and Islam?

While we are discussing the issue of culturally appropriating sacred religions, why are regressive leftist Christians not bending over backwards in self-flagellation because Christianity unceremoniously appropriates elements from the 3500-year-old religion Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic faith in which the prophet is born of a virgin and there is a cosmic duality between good and evil? Perhaps regressive leftists are not as #woke as they like to believe.

Opposition to cultural appropriation is by far the most ludicrous component of both regressive leftism and the alt-right, which is saying something.

Culture is not sacred. Traditions are not sacred. Culture is useful for

binding people together in tribes. This is an adaption that arose when people were in constant competition for access to hunting grounds and then access to arable land. Culture acted as a unifier that gave a competitive edge over groups that stood divided and driven by the self-interests of individual members. Culture is merely a tool, just as sex is merely a tool to ensure the continuity of a species, regardless of whatever special significance people choose to invent for it.

Social capital and interpersonal trust have always been important and will continue to be important. However, it is important to understand that there is nothing otherworldly about culture that grants it special importance. It is merely a natural adaptation. Just

as we do not weep over the culture of hunters who made cave paintings in France, we do not weep over the culture of Incas who sacrificed their children so that the gods would ensure the existence of their world, and we do not weep over the culture of extinct tribes the world over, people will be fine and humanity will continue if we appropriate culture. Culture is not sacred. Culture is not property. Certain artifacts may carry significant weight, but culture is a set of ideas that cannot be owned, not even by a group.

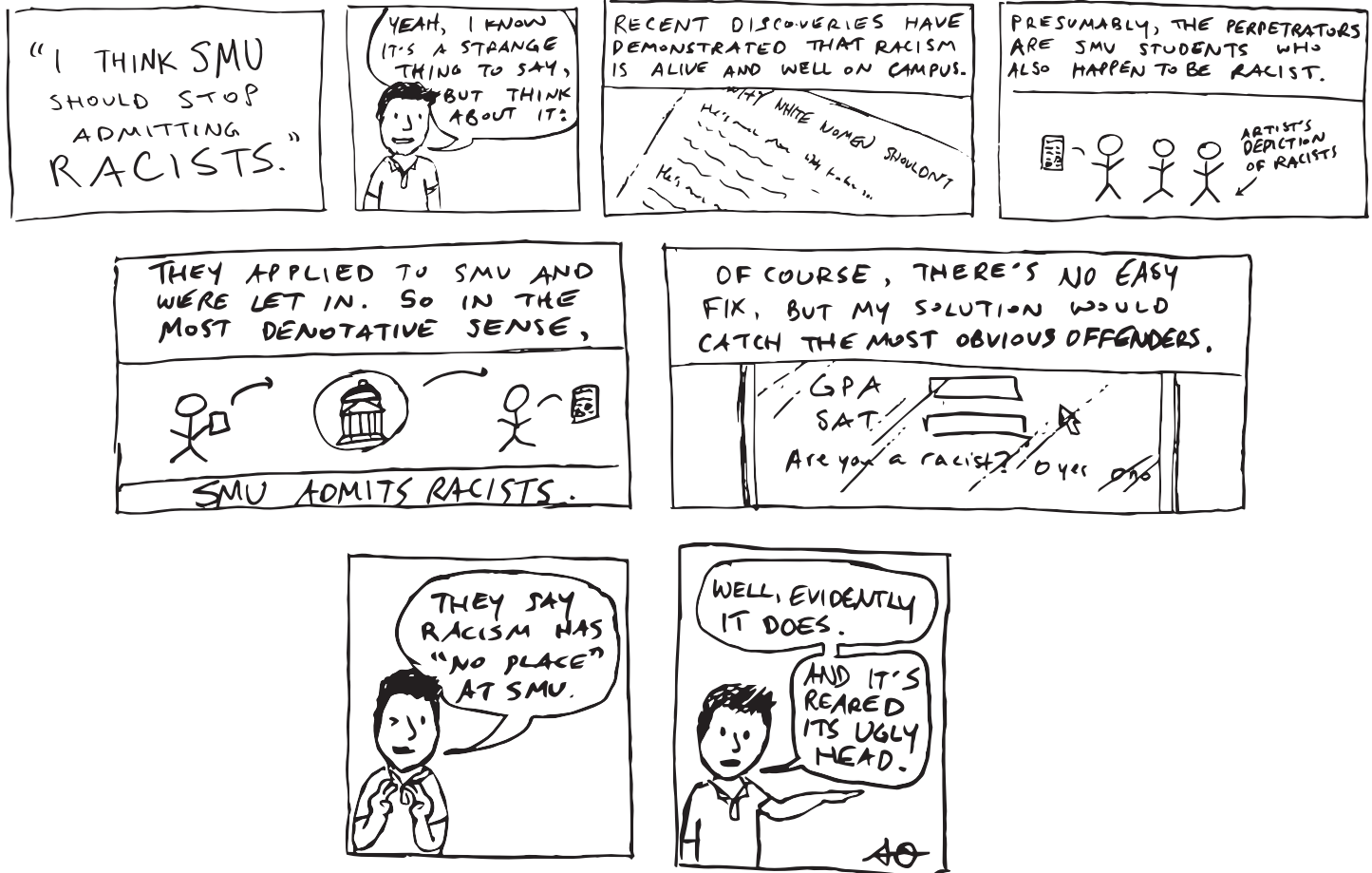
While culture has been helpful historically to bind people together, it does no good when a cultural identity does not align with a national identity, which is today the only rational form of tribalism. In the present day, the

obsession with ever smaller identity groups risks atomizing American society. We are a pluralistic nation and we should be proud of our particular identities. But we must still always set aside our smaller identity groups for our national identity. Cultural appropriation and assimilation are necessary steps toward creating the social capital to ensure a broad-based harmony that cuts across demographic lines.

Cultural appropriation is good. Assimilation is good. And that is what will ultimately end discrimination and ensure equal opportunities so that all people may achieve by their own merit and live free of undue barriers to success.

Worth a Thousand Words

BY ANDREW OH



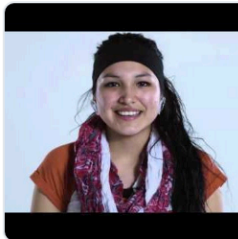


Leonardo DiCaprio ✓
@LeoDiCaprio

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Standing w/ the Great Sioux Nation to protect their water & lands. Take a stand: change.org/rezpectourwater
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9:24 PM - 9 May 2016



Jo Ellen Darcy : Stop the Dakota Access Pip...

I'm 13 years-old and as an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, I've lived my whole life by the Missouri River. It runs by my change.org

↩ ↻ 2,069 ❤ 4,342

on the Internet. The online publicity surrounding those movements prolongs the movements themselves. But is passive support really enough to create long-term change?

Slacktivism, despite its negative connotation, does produce positive results and acts as a successful outlet for minority voices. Humans have an innate desire to be a part of something greater than themselves, and slacktivism provides an outlet through which that desire can be met. However, one argument against slacktivism is that it is simply too lazy, too effortless. Virtually anyone with Internet access can now raise awareness of and support social movements. But that shouldn't mean everyone who tweets in support of a cause can rightfully call themselves an activist. Activism, minus the slack, can require immense amounts of time, money, and effort, all of which slacktivism does not.

If passive activism is so successful in increasing the longevity of a movement, does that mean slacktivists can call themselves activists? If so, then there would undoubtedly be an overwhelming mass proclaiming themselves to be activists, when all they've done is compose a tweetstorm. It certainly does appear that America is more activist than ever before, with all of the so-called activist content floating around the Internet. The success of slacktivism leads to the conclusion that it cannot be dismissed as useless or ineffective. However, it is undoubtable that true activism requires true effort, and whether or not slacktivism is true remains up for debate. How important actually having that debate is...I'll leave that to you.

Slacktivism: Fueling Minority Voices by Retweeting

BY KAREN GUAN

The word "slacktivism" has not yet infiltrated the mainstream, but the actions behind it have permeated the Internet. Slacktivism, also known as "passive activism" or "armchair activism," refers to actions performed on the Internet that support a political or social cause but require little active effort and commitment. Though it seems logical that active effort in support of an issue, such as organizing a rally or speaking out, conveys the message best, passive effort is not only on the rise but can be just as effective as traditional activism, if not more so.

Traditionally, people have given

impassioned speeches and turned to the streets to raise awareness and support of their cause. Nowadays, that tradition has not died, but has been given a twist due to the rise of people following issues through their Twitter accounts. Popular examples of slacktivism include, but are certainly not limited to, retweeting and signing petitions. Modern groups with notable causes include, among many others, Black Lives Matter and the Native Americans protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Though both movements are a product of the efforts of minority groups, their work has gained widespread attention, the majority of which has been created

"HUMANS HAVE AN INNATE DESIRE TO BE PART OF SOMETHING GREATER THAN THEMSELVES"



The Struggle to Come Home

BY TERISHA KOLENCHERRY

When I was in the first grade, my parents sent me to a new Catholic school and on the first day during recess a girl in my class came up to me and said, “You don’t belong here, you’re not white.” She was black. I was brown. I was confused. It took me forever to understand the forces at play in that early interaction. It wasn’t until later that I had a realization: she and I had both internalized racism at several points in our lives, and I needed to start owning my brown body.

It would be easy to say that my journey with my racial identity began there, but there’s really no singular moment I can point to as a starting point. Race is omnipresent for me; no matter how hard I tried to hide from it, it’s always been there and always will be. I grew up in predominantly white settings with immigrant parents who were trying to navigate this foreign country just as much as my brother and I were. There were no signposts from them in terms of how to navigate racial issues and our identities as brown, well-educated people. They were focused on making sure we had food on the table and a roof over our heads. So I took cues from

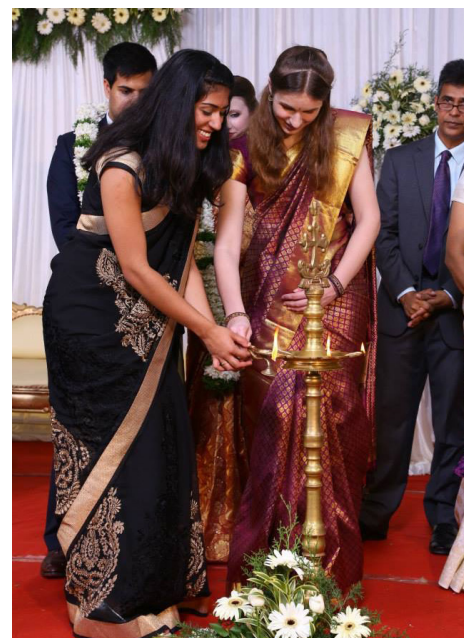
my classmates. I stopped speaking Malayalam, yelled at my mom to stop packing me Indian food for lunch, and felt really self-conscious wearing Indian clothes—all things that bring me to tears when I think about them because I’m ashamed of the way I treated my culture. I just wanted to fit in, but I wish so dearly that I had understood the value of my heritage.

All of these nudges away from my culture only served to distance me from a racial identity that I really couldn’t shake. Eventually I would “pass” and people would think of me as the “white Indian,” and I remember wearing that as a badge of pride. I went so far as to make jokes about Indian culture that make me cringe today. I went along with my white friends, who thought it was cool to make fun of my skin that was “the color of shit haha” and tell me that at least I smelled better than Indians but I always had this sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. One day I’d had enough, so I picked up my lunch tray the next day and left. I went off into high school surrounded by Asian people, which was great but also meant that I never really had to confront my status as an Indian

woman. I was comfortable and I didn’t feel different.

Then I came to SMU, where all of a sudden I was thrown into a very white space, and I just slipped back into passing mode. However, something was different this time around. I had been involved in debate during high school, and therefore exposed to literature and discussions on race, feminism, and sexual minorities. This exposure gave me the language necessary to express my frustrations, as well as the knowledge to pinpoint issues I had in my interactions with the world. However, it was easier to talk about race in Austin and at SMU I was far from home. There wasn’t a place for me to touch base with my identity here. It wasn’t until I started dating this guy that I really began to confront my need to accept and own my identity. We would go out to events or to grab food, and I started noticing that I was the only person of color in the room or one of three in the general vicinity. I would point it out, and it wasn’t until the third or fourth time that I became conscious of this that I fully understood and felt that I was a minority. However, I trudged on. I met his friends, who slowly came to be my friends, and I grew closer with all of them, but something was missing and I couldn’t put my finger on it.

I am so thankful for this individual because he has been integral to my blossoming as a woman of color. We had conversations about our respective racial identities (he is half-Asian) and he provided a safe space for me to explain my frustration with being an Indian woman. He would say things about his experience and I would point and say “I feel the same way!” relieved that I wasn’t just going crazy. He introduced me to literature about racial tensions in the United States and he held me while I cried for hours after reading *Just Mercy*. His father called me “Ms. Chapati,” and it took forever for me to help him realize why that was wrong. Likewise, I would make jokes about him being half-Asian and it took forever for me to fully understand the weight of what I was saying.



Years ago I would have just let the comments slide, but with him I felt comfortable enough to stand up for myself. We created a sacred space of trust and comfort that made it okay for me to be a woman of color. A space that still endures, even as the nature of our relationship has transitioned into the best of friendships.

However, even with that space, I still wasn't comfortable with most other people and my race. When a couple of my friends made comments about Indian graduate students and how they just "come and take our free food, even though they're not going to join our organization and that's annoying," it took me forever to speak up. It took me a while to understand what was wrong. Another time, my friends and I were in the middle of Iowa, where we walked into a fast food place and immediately realized there were no people of color. I felt very uncomfortable and I remember one of my friends making a joke about how it was a 'sea of white.'

We walked away from the Culver's and conversation moved onto other topics, but I kept thinking about that incident. After the election of Donald Trump, I was surrounded with messages of concern and support; however, none of this support was from my main group of friends—they just kept going on with their lives. We would talk about race sometimes but it was always a surface level discussion. That's when I realized why I was so upset. My friends all identified as white. They were able to walk away from any discussion about race without being personally perturbed and go about their daily lives without thinking about racial issues. This realization dovetailed with a crisis of identity. Black Lives Matter was gaining a lot of steam and I had been reading a lot of literature about mass incarceration. My heart wept, but I was also confused as to the part I played in all of it.

Asians are the model minority in the United States. They are seen

as hard-working and are touted as an example for all minorities, which means we're often used as a tool to justify certain types of oppression against other minorities ("if the Asians can work hard and be successful, why can't black people?"). As a result of this status, we're often left out of discussions on race. Most people think of race as simply black and white, when in reality there are many other racial identities that are not included in the conversation. This is not to take away from the experience of other races, but simply to acknowledge that the black community is eons ahead of other communities, including the Asian community, in terms of organizing against forms of oppression, most likely because the need to do so has been very pressing. It doesn't mean all Asian families are privileged, but being Asian in the United States can be slightly confusing when you enter into discourse about race.

In this greater context and against

“FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND FELT THAT I WAS A MINORITY”

the backdrop of violence against black people and Native Americans, I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't know, and to some extent still struggle with, how to properly ally with my black friends and still also speak out about my struggles without sounding like someone who is discounting their experience. On top of that, it was hard balancing my parent's cultural experiences back in India and my identity growing up in the United States. A quote by Ijeoma Umebinyuo popped up on my newsfeed that put it so perfectly:

“So, here you are too foreign for home too foreign for here. Never enough for both.”

This sense of limbo overwhelmed me and completely consumed me. I woke up every morning thinking that the rest of my life was going to be like this—never enough for both, always being “too much” for my white friends, always feeling just a bit left out. Due to this stress (on top of simply burning out academically) I quickly stopped eating many meals, I would set my alarm thirty minutes earlier to give myself time to pump myself up in order to get out of bed, I would be with my friends and then just withdraw—I was depressed. I felt alone. The guy and I had broken up; we were navigating how to be friends

and it took us a while to settle into just being best friends, and I didn't want to rely on him too much. I didn't feel safe talking to my friends and my brother was back home with a wife and a job. So I made two decisions: I rushed an MGC and I started going to CAPS.

I thought CAPS and my sorority would be a saving grace, which was so wrong because I didn't need to be saved—I just needed a space to be myself in full form. Through CAPS, I was able to finally say out loud all the thoughts I had been holding in. I was able to work through the issues I had with my friends, from a fundamental and racial perspective. From my sorority I found a place where being loud was just fine and where I wasn't “too much.” I found a place where I could talk about issues that I was going through, but where race didn't have to be brought up all the time in a formal conversation. I was also exposed to a lot of perspectives on race, religion, politics, and other issues that I didn't agree with half the time. Although sometimes I feel like an outsider, I gained a semblance of home and learned that comfort doesn't mean everyone always agrees with everything you say, but rather that they give you the chance to say it and engage in conversation because they care. I found inner strength that I never thought I was capable of, which allowed me to have a conversation with my other friends about race and the nature of our friendship. It taught me the importance of having spaces for all minorities to feel comfortable with their bodies and identities. Let me be clear though, having support and safe spaces doesn't make everything else go away.

I was talking to my friends about being a racial minority and asked why certain people in the group never spoke up when we talked about race and just looked bored. One answer they gave was that they just felt that when it comes to race, they were brought up to treat everyone the same way and so that's just what they're going to do. It wasn't an easy thing to hear and I don't think they really

understand that treating me the same way they treat everyone else in the group is what has led to me feeling like I can't have discussions about race. I'm not white. I didn't grow up in a white household. I should be treated with the same respect as everyone else, but saying that I'm the same as everyone else is erasing a fundamental part of my identity. A part that I have not brought forward as much as I should have, but something that is so integral to who I am and impacts how I go through the world. Something that I tried to cut away when I was a kid, but am suddenly realizing is so important to who I am.

I don't think they'll ever fully understand the trauma of having wished yourself into another body because of the color of your skin; the shame when I look back and ask how I could have ever thought that the aromatic spices of my mother's cooking were inferior and stinky, or how I could have been embarrassed by the lilt of my parents' English that reminds me of Kerala and the summers we spent there. I think about how when we all go out, excitedly, for Indian food, they taste the same morsels but view the experience as merely a foray into spicy food. What they don't realize is that my excitement is about so much more than that. For them it's food; for me it's peace, a state of self-love and self-understanding. It's coming home to the comfort of your mother's cooking after being away for so long. I've been wandering a lot for the past 20 years, but I'm finally ready. I'm coming home.

“I'M FINALLY READY. I'M COMING HOME”



One Community, Many Identities

COMPILED BY CAMILLE AUCOIN

SMU's Service House (affectionately known as SMUSH around campus) is a diverse community made up of students of many majors, origins, ethnicities, creeds, and more. Residents complete 30 hours of community service per semester and all contribute to the success of the community through kitchen duty, event planning, and house programming.

The following is a compilation by current and past residents of the Service House highlighting the great aspects of SMUSH and how the community has affected them personally.

Arianna Santiago

Service House Resident

"We think it's done," our housemates told us. I eyed the flour coating the kitchen skeptically. Twenty-something starving college students were still waiting patiently in the common room, two hours after the highly-anticipated "All American Dinner" had been advertised. We had started a movie and were playing a highly competitive game of ping-pong, but after a rather large bang from the kitchen, I poked my head in

to investigate.

Our chefs for the week showed me their pan of chicken. I blinked at it, complimented them on their seasoning, and called in reinforcements from the common room. Between all of us, we were able to salvage the side dishes and stick the chicken back in the oven where it belonged. *And no one really minded.*

I've been in several types of communities. Communities that you slip into like you've always belonged there, communities that had to be built from nothing, and communities that were grown. The Service House is a themed on-campus dormitory that houses twenty-eight people focused on performing community service throughout the Dallas area. And the group of people living there share a couple characteristics that have turned the house into a community rather than a dorm.

Community is built with intention. A big calendar sits in the common room that everyone writes their individual organization events on with an expo marker. Students share events and causes they care about at weekly house meetings, and any other

resident who can attend does their best to show up to support the others.

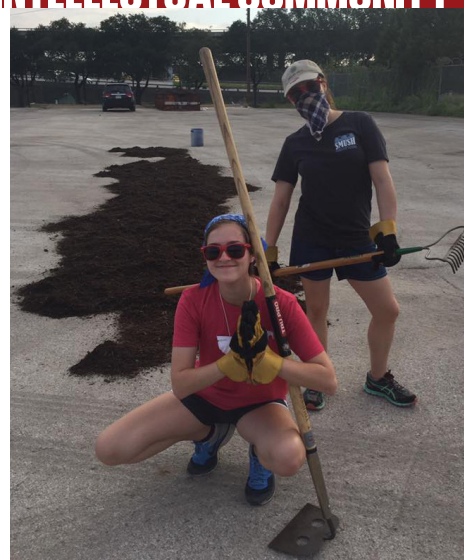
We are a community built on serving each other and the community. Each member of the community serves on a committee that supports the house, from special events to service coordinator, faculty liaison to house meeting facilitator. A roommate pair cooks a meal for the entire house each week.

We are a community centered on diversity. With two-thirds of the house being minority groups, diversity is welcomed, and we run programs to discuss topics of civil rights. Each member has an opportunity to share their story at the weekly house meeting, and residents take turns giving a verbal encouragement to the speaker.



The members living in the Service House didn't wake up one morning and all be friends. Community is built and sustained through effort, programming, and commitment. And what's amazing about including leadership and committee opportunities within a community is that members can go out and build communities themselves.

Our housemates' first foray into cooking may not have been the best, but we congratulated them on their effort for us just the same.



Erin Walsh

Service House Resident

SMUSH is a beautiful example of how people from all walks of life can quickly become a family! The mix of goofy moments and interesting conversations never fails to uplift me.

Andrea Salt

Service House Resident

Living in Service House provides a family that supports all you do, and connects you to the Dallas community in a way that lets you create direct change through helping others!

Liliana Mata

Service House Resident

Living in the service house connects you with students who are already active in leadership positions from various organizations on campus, and is a wonderful out-of-class learning environment.

Syd Clark

Service House Resident

Everyone in the Service House is committed to something greater than themselves. I don't think I've met anyone who lives here (or has lived

here in the past) who is not motivated and doesn't have drive or purpose. It's the perfect place to get inspired every single day #Litty

Micah Johnson

Service House RCD

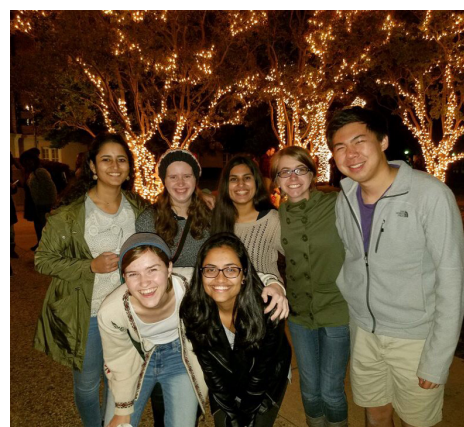
I really appreciate the genuine family atmosphere in the house. It is great to have a safe space amongst all the chaos of college life, and I believe the Service House has the perfect combination of Adulting, Support, and Service.

Paul Lujan

SMU Class of 2016, Service House Alum

SMUSH forced me to look at the bigger issues surrounding service. Not only did I volunteer at schools but I asked why there was a misappropriation of resources in children's education. Not only did I volunteer at Habitat-for-Humanity but I asked why homelessness is a bigger issue with different demographics. Not only did I help with short term fixes but I was also introduced to envisioning long term solutions.

Applications to live in the Service House open December 2016 on Orgs@SMU





Fighting for Diversity at SMU and Nationwide

BY ALEC MASON

The past few years in American history have been defined by increased racial tensions, police brutality against minorities, and protests against intolerance. One of these protests that sparked major controversy was carried out by San Francisco 49ers player Colin Kaepernick when he refused to stand for the national anthem to protest bigotry. This type of protest spread quickly with similar demonstrations occurring nationwide, including locations none other than Southern Methodist University. Earlier in the season, the school made national news when a group of students, including five band members, took a knee while the anthem was played before a football game. A divided SMU community was revealed, with some expressing disgust at the students' actions and others expressing support.

Now that the election is over and Donald Trump has been designated as president-elect, the future is not looking very bright for many people—not just minorities. I had the opportunity to speak with Sydney Clark, one of the five band members who protested in the fall, about her outlook on the progress of diversity

both at SMU and nationwide.

Alec Mason: As a person who has fought and still fights for racial equality, what is your reaction to the protests, intolerance, and violence that have spawned from this election cycle?

Sydney Clark: I think the protests on either side are expected. This was a very polarizing election, and tensions are incredibly high.

AM: Do you think a Trump presidency is a danger to race relations and equality?

SC: Yes, I do. Trump is a bigot and was a bigot very openly during his entire campaign. He's putting people in his cabinet who are members of the Alt-Right and other white supremacist groups. Worst of all is probably his vice president Mike Pence. This is a man who believes that conversion therapy is a valid option for LGBT+ people. It's not looking too hot for anyone who isn't a straight, well-off, Christian white man.

AM: In the days following the election, we saw many reactions to

Trump's win here on campus. In particular, the morning of November 9th, many students walking to class came across Sigma Chi's white sheet banner proclaiming "Make America Great Again." What did you think of the banner?

SC: I think that everyone has the right to free speech. So even though I hated the sign, there was nothing wrong with it. There was a petition going around on Facebook to have it removed and I spoke out against it because it was essentially against freedom of speech, especially because the sign wasn't filled with any kind of hate speech. It was only the campaign slogan for the president-elect (even though I know that the slogan is rooted in something deeper). If we wanted to combat the sign, it wasn't about trying to get it down, we had to counter it.

AM: In reaction to Sigma Chi's banner, places like Meadows and SMU Service House raised their own banners that proclaimed phrases such as Michelle Obama's "When They Go Low, We Go High." What emotions did you feel when you came across these new banners?

SC: The first sign was actually my own council's house, the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) House. It was a sign that said "We gon' be alright," which is a quote from a great Kendrick

“IT STARTS WITH IMPLEMENTING MORE EFFORTS IN DIVERSITY HERE”



“THESE BANNERS
FILL ME WITH
PRIDE. THEY
SAY NOTHING
HATEFUL”

Lamar song. It wasn't even a whole day before someone ripped it down and stomped and crumbled it up. It was suggested we put a sign up in solidarity for SMUSH (I'm a resident there), and it was a house effort to put one up the next couple of days. These banners fill me with pride. They say nothing hateful. They don't even address the election. They just reassure those who feel victimized that we stand in solidarity, and that these are places that are safe for them, and that's very important for some SMU students to know.

AM: Many people have fears that

the president-elect has sparked a new resurgence of many hate groups, particularly the Alt-Right movement. We even had an incident on campus in which someone from the Alt-Right hung racist fliers around campus. Do you fear that this type of hate may become the new reality for minorities at SMU?

SC: No, I don't, because this has always been the reality for minorities at SMU. Now, people are just more openly bigots. That's all this election did: give bigots confidence to be more open. Every single year that I've gone to school at this institution, there has been an incident that sparked racial tensions (a "thug" themed party, a Greek rank post about why sororities don't accept black women, endless Yik Yak posts about how black people are only useful for sports). This is not a new issue for SMU. It's just more prevalent. Now, instead of anonymously having these opinions and intentions, we openly tell girls wearing Mexican jerseys to "take it back to Mexico since she has so much pride."

AM: In response to these incidents of intolerance, many parts of the SMU community have come together to fight back such as the Defending Dignity event by the Embrey Human Rights Program. Do you think the

SMU community is doing enough to fight for diversity?

SC: No. We aren't. Minorities on this campus have asked for years and years for there to be a diversity component to PRW. "Every Mustang Will Be Valued" is clearly not enough. That's a 30-minute exercise at the beginning of a student's SMU career, and then they forget about it. We're doing a poor job of mandatory education about diversity, which is quite ironic because this school's slogan is "World Changers, Shaped Here." How can you change the world when you know nothing about it?

AM: SMU has been known for quite some time to be lacking in diversity. What steps do you think the administration and community as a whole could take to help make this university a welcoming place for students of all backgrounds?

SC: I think it starts with implementing more efforts in diversity here. Once potential students off campus see how inclusive and diverse it is here, then it's easier for a multitude of students to feel more accepted here and want to go to this school. Action shows change and growth.

“HOW CAN YOU
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